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WILLIAM LEAVITT/WASHINGTON

AMERICAN STRENGTH AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

ANNCR: AS THE UNITED STATES PREPARES FOR A NEW ADMINISTRATION, THERE'S CONSIDERABLE FOCUS ON COMPARISONS OF AMERICAN AND SOVIET MILITARY STRENGTH. VOA NEWS ANALYST WILLIAM LEAVITT EXPLORES THIS QUESTION.

VOICE: AMERICA HAS JUST PASSED THROUGH A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WHICH WILL SOON BRING NEW LEADERSHIP TO WASHINGTON. SO IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT, IN A PERIOD OF GOVERNMENTAL TRANSITION, THE OPINIONS OF MILITARY ANALYSTS, IN AND OUT OF THE OFFICIAL INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY, ON RELATIVE SOVIET AND AMERICAN STRENGTH, HAVE BEEN AIRED IN PRESS REPORTS. THAT KIND OF DISCUSSION REFLECTS THE BASICALLY OPEN NATURE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY, AND IT UNDERSCORES, TOO, THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S CONTINUING RECOGNITION OF MILITARY STRENGTH AS A PRIME NECESSITY IN A DANGEROUS WORLD.

ONE MAJOR STUDY, SPONSORED BY THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AND REPORTED ON IN THE MEDIA, IS SAID TO SUGGEST THAT THE SOVIET UNION MAY BE SHIFTING ITS OBJECTIVE FROM WHAT THE SPECIALISTS CALL ROUGH MILITARY PARITY WITH THE UNITED STATES TOWARD A POSTURE OF SUPERIORITY.

SUCH A POLICY ON THE PART OF THE SOVIET UNION WOULD, OF COURSE, BE A TROUBLING PROSPECT AND WOULD BE IN DIRECT CONFLICT WITH THE STATED AIMS OF BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION IN THE CONTEXT OF DETENTE AND HOPED-FOR ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF ARMS CONTROL. BUT IN CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIET UNION MIGHT INDEED BE AIMING AT MILITARY SUPERIORITY, IT IS ALSO VERY IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT THAT QUESTIONS OF INTENT MUST ALWAYS BE LEAVENED WITH ASSESSMENTS OF CAPACITY.

AND IN THIS CONTEXT, THE SOVIET-AMERICAN MILITARY BALANCE HAS TO BE EXAMINED AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN CAPABILITIES. CERTAINLY, SOVIET INTENTIONS DESERVE CONTINUOUS ATTENTION BY THOSE CHARGED WITH AMERICAN, AND WESTERN, DEFENSE, BUT THE REALITY OF AMERICAN STRENGTH REMAINS REASSURING. AS PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER SAID PUBLICLY ON MONDAY, THE UNITED STATES IS STILL FAR STRONGER THAN THE SOVIET UNION -- AS HE PUT IT -- IN MOST MEANS OF MEASURING MILITARY STRENGTH.

MISTER CARTER MADE THAT OBSERVATION TO REPORTERS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE SAID HE WOULD PROBABLY MEET WITH GENERAL SECRETARY LEONID BREZHNEV DURING 1977 TO TALK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF FURTHER SOVIET-AMERICAN ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS AND OTHER OUTSTANDING ISSUES.

WHAT ARE THE REALITIES OF AMERICAN STRENGTH? THEY RANGE FROM THE CONTINUING POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES AS THE WORLD'S LEADER IN TECHNOLOGY TO THE FACT THAT THE AMERICAN ECONOMY IS TWICE THE SIZE OF THE SOVIET ECONOMY, A REALITY THAT AFFORDS THE UNITED STATES THE CAPACITY FOR QUICK RESPONSE TO MILITARY REQUIREMENTS. (OPT) A CASE IN POINT IS SO-CALLED MIRV TECHNOLOGY. THIS ABILITY TO MOUNT, ON A SINGLE BALLISTIC MISSILE, SEVERAL WARHEADS WHICH CAN THEN BE LAUNCHED IN FLIGHT AT SEVERAL DIFFERENT TARGETS WAS DEVELOPED IN THE LATE 1960S AND BECAME OPERATIONAL SEVERAL YEARS AHEAD OF SIMILAR SOVIET WEAPONS. THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF OTHER EXAMPLES OF AMERICAN TECHNOLOGICAL QUALITY THAT CAN BE CITED, ALONG WITH COMPARISONS OF THE POTENTIAL RELIABILITY OF NATO FORCES IN CRISIS AS OPPOSED TO THOSE OF THE WARSAW PACT. (END OPT)

HOWEVER, THE IMPORTANT QUESTION, IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, IS NOT SO MUCH WHICH SIDE LEADS WHICH, BUT RATHER HOW STRONG IS THE WILL TO PARLEY FOR PEACE. =AND MISTER CARTER'S ANNOUNCED DESIRE TO MEET WITH MISTER BREZHNEV UNDERSCORES THAT AMERICAN WILL TO PARLEY.

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